

# FROM THE EDITORS

## EDITORIAL REFLECTIONS ON *ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES*' REVISED EDITORIAL MISSION

About two years ago, the Academy of Management began a multi-stakeholder consultation process to align the mission statements of *AMJ*, *AMR*, *AMP*, *AMD*, *Annals*, and *AMLE* and at the same time ensure their distinctiveness. The exercise recognized the recent growth of the Academy's journal portfolio, which has come in response to the expanding scope of management research. The process identified a number of white spaces in the journal portfolio and across the constellation of management journals. The revised editorial mission statement reads as follows:

*AMP*'s mission is to publish papers with policy implications based on management research. *AMP* articles leverage management theory to understand contemporary behavioral, socioeconomic, and technological trends, highlighting their implications for the public interest or relying on a strong evidence base of empirical findings to inform public policy. Authors develop connections between management evidence and public policy concerns by (i) critically assessing the impact of management theory and research on public policy, (ii) summarizing empirical evidence to emphasize their policy implications, (iii) identifying policy concerns that should motivate the development of new management theory and research, and/or (iv) establishing a research agenda that informs public policy.

Elements of this statement have appeared in prior ones. It is not new. It does emphasize the importance of the policy dimension and privileges contributions that engage in that conversation. The statement implies two opportunities for *AMP* contributors.

First, management authors can explore the implications of their research for the public interest. *Perspectives* has a high impact factor because it is relevant: *Perspectives* articles distill, refine, and extend debates to challenge how we think about the role of the organization in the political economy. Authors should seek to make sense of complex debates and promote an understanding of management that accounts for contemporary events in the real world.

Second, authors have a place to discuss normative theory. Policy is not strategy. Policy refers to the sets of principles that give rise to an objective and the rules designed to sustain it. Strategy is the operationalizing mechanisms and techniques used to achieve said objective. This is not to say that strategy is unimportant at *AMP*. However, policy is normative whereas strategy is descriptive.

### “... PAPERS WITH POLICY IMPLICATIONS BASED ON MANAGEMENT RESEARCH”

The study of management can be divided into two streams. The first is administration and process. This refers to the implementation of policies and their associated formal and informal organizational rules. Notice that much of what we study in management is about how we ensure continuity—the sailing of the organizational ship in a particular direction.<sup>1</sup> We have observed that most theorizing in management journals has largely focused on process questions. For instance, there is an ever-expanding body of management that seeks to document, explore, and predict the consequences of embedded patterns of behavior in organizations. Examples include the status quo bias in decision making, organizational inertia in strategy, and research linking HR practices to organizational outcomes. These questions are easier to address because they need only describe what *is* done in organizations, rather than what *should* be done. Such research usually takes as given the organization's objectives (growth, efficiency, justice, and so on). Scholars are thus focused on what drives managerial decisions in the light of these desired outcomes.

Less attention is devoted to why and where practices may be (mis)aligned and (un)sustained, or whether there genuinely is an optimal way of

<sup>1</sup> With few exceptions, even research on the founding of new enterprises is weighted toward the *how* rather than the *why*.

managing. This leads to the second, relatively less discussed stream in management research: policy, how it arises, and how it is formed. *Perspectives* articles interpret the evidence to explain why traditional views of a managerial phenomenon may be incomplete and return to the evidentiary base to link their observations to normative discussions. They do this by summarizing the empirical evidence to emphasize their policy implications. They also do this by identifying policy concerns that should motivate the development of new management research.

To a large extent normative theory has been left to the practitioner or public policy journals, not because they are unimportant but because they do not lend themselves to the empirical methods with which management scholars are trained. Indeed, it is common for reviewers of theoretical articles to make a distinction between descriptive and normative theory, and to privilege the former. Studying policy relevant to the organization is about discovering why such rules and principles come to be, their fitness for the organization's purpose, the effects of policy changes, and how better policies can be devised. The result is theory that better addresses the policy dimension (much management theory has little to say about this) and hence a research agenda that directly informs questions of policy.

Let's use micro research as an example. Much of our evidence shows that general mental ability or IQ is the best predictor of job performance. However, there is a competing body of research showing that self-efficacy is a better predictor of a person's performance. This body of evidence would have strong policy implications in terms of hiring in organizations, the education system, and curriculum design.

All this said, *Perspectives* is *not* a journal of public policy. Management scholars are not trained in policy analysis, and few—even those who write at the macro level of analysis—usually address questions in the public interest.<sup>2</sup> Our programs of study are seldom aimed at the public policy or regulatory audience, unlike our colleagues in law, public policy, and macroeconomics. This is not to say that scholars trained in public economics or macroeconomics are unwelcome at *AMP*. Quite the opposite. The way to think about *AMP*'s editorial mission is that it takes research on people and organizations as a starting point to explore implications for public policy, and how public policy affects the way we research

organizations and people. Therefore, articles published in *AMP* start from the business disciplines to establish their foundational arguments. They draw upon the evidence to address questions arising from theory–practice, theory–theory, or theory–policy gaps exposed by the juxtaposition of different theoretical perspectives.

For example, research on compensation tends to focus on how pay affects individual behaviors and organizational outcomes. In economics, the question of how minimum wages affect general productivity and welfare is replete with empirical research and economic policy recommendations. Yet because large swaths of the economy are paid a minimum wage, we expect minimum wage policies to also have a meaningful impact on individual behavior and organizational policy on training intensity, technology substitution, and even product innovation. There is little research on these questions. *Perspectives* is the place where agenda setting for cross-disciplinary research of this type should occur.

### **“... LEVERAGE MANAGEMENT THEORY TO UNDERSTAND CONTEMPORARY BEHAVIORAL, SOCIOECONOMIC, AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS ...”**

Any discussion of public policy also has to recognize that policy questions occur at all levels of analysis, from the macro to the micro, and that the levels are interconnected. This is because people and organizations are embedded in institutional environments that influence and constrain what they can do. The most obvious are the formal regulatory channels. Formal regulation is the operationalization of a public policy framework agreed upon by a society's political representatives. Therefore, considerations of public policy implications make sense only in light of the context (institutional, geographic, and time frame) in which the policies are formed.

The multilevel and intertemporal nature of public policy implications is immediately obvious when one compares public policy across institutional environments and epochs. Quite simply there are times when particular configurations of institutions work better than others. Yet, while protracted crises lend themselves to institutional failure, this does not always result in institutional reordering. This normative interpretation and multilevel view mean that *AMP* welcomes micro and macro research. For instance, based on theory and institutional differences, one can advocate the view that a different form of justice (e.g., equality rather than equity) should be

<sup>2</sup> The themes of recent Academy of Management conferences suggest that questions in the public interest are percolating into mainstream management studies.

emphasized in some contexts. Or that new technological developments and ways of organizing work (e.g., online labor platforms) may challenge traditional employment relationships and therefore cause us to question organizational design as an expression of hierarchical power structures.

**“... RELYING ON A STRONG EVIDENCE BASE  
OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS TO INFORM  
PUBLIC POLICY ...”**

At *AMP*, we want authors to demonstrate the conviction of their ideas, not parrot from long lists of citations. However, *Perspectives* is *not* a journal of opinion. While we want *Perspectives* to be a place for scholars to express their thoughts on important questions in their disciplines, it is more than a soapbox. Evidence-based discourse means that an article relies on the literature to establish the provenance of facts and ideas that support an author's analyses and conclusions. It is not the simple assertion, no matter how plausible, of personal opinion. Although the latter point may sound rhetorical, it is not, as some journals are now experimenting with this style of writing.

Evidence-based discourse is challenging when bridging disciplines. What evidence to rely on and how one interprets that evidence can be subject to disciplinary tradition. Oral history, for example, is the only way that some disciplines establish the evidentiary basis for their arguments. In other disciplines, such data are relegated to the status of anecdotes. This is why disciplines tend to “stay in their lanes” in formulating problem sets, researching those problems, and drawing implications. For us,

this means that the most vexing, and interesting, questions occupy the boundaries between disciplines, and they usually remain unasked. To discuss policy, management scholars must cross disciplinary boundaries and levels of analysis. Additionally, the systems view of contemporary research embraces the increasing overlap between the social and natural sciences and management theory. At *AMP*, we are interested in questions that are multidisciplinary. Examples include the 2016 symposium on nonmarket strategies and the 2017 one discussing mental health and entrepreneurship.

## CONCLUSION

*AMP*'s editorial mission affirms the long-term trajectory of the journal while creating new and exciting opportunities for authors. Our dual-stage submission process affords potential contributors the opportunity to test-fit their ideas, no matter how far out, with the journal's mission. At the same time, the process respects reviewers by discouraging speculative submissions that have been rejected for quality reasons in other places. It fosters the emergence of new ideas from the integration of macro and micro domains. It offers authors the opportunity to express their intellectual voices because good *AMP* articles present complex debates to new audiences, without patronizing the reader. Finally, because *AMP*'s audience is disciplinarily diverse and includes policy thought leaders, authors can potentially influence public debate and policy.

*AMP* Editors<sup>3</sup>

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